

Legacy witnesses tag government officials

by NON ALQUITRAN & CHRISTINA MENDEZ
Philstar.com

MANILA—Two former ranking officers of the Legacy Group who surfaced last March 5 to spill the beans on their boss, Celso de los Angeles, said that there are government officials who benefited from the investment scheme of the companies of the Legacy Group.

But Carolina Hinola and Namnama Santos, former senior vice president and chief finance officer of the Legacy Group, respectively, declined to reveal the identities of the government officials, saying they would do so at the Senate hearing on March 9.

The two are set to testify at the Senate committee on trade and commerce hearing chaired by Sen. Mar Roxas on March 9.

Hinola and Santos claimed that De los Angeles transferred millions of pesos from a trust fund of the pre-need firm to his personal bank account in Banco de Oro (BDO).

The two showed documents in their possession, including original disbursement vouchers, checks, deposit slips, and other documents contained in two large carton boxes, that could prove the guilt of De los Angeles.

Santos claimed that when Legacy was already in trouble, De los Angeles directed them to hide until

the controversy subsided and ordered them to keep all the documents safe.

However, both feared for their lives and decided to seek help from Parents Enabling Parents Coalition (PEPC).

"We do not know where to go. We are very bothered. They (De los Angeles camp) have been calling us," Hinola said.

According to PEPC president Philip Piccio, their accounting showed that De los Angeles was able to transfer P48 million to his personal bank account.

When they were still with the company, Hinola and Santos admitted that they knew about the irregularities happening inside the pre-need firm but decided to remain silent because they "need to earn a living for their families."

Now that they have come out to squeal on De los Angeles, Hinola said he would do everything to pin them down.

Both witnesses are presently under the protective custody of the Department of Justice (DOJ), with the Senate also willing to provide security for them.

Roxas said "De los Angeles' corrupt schemes should be stopped" and vowed that there would be accountability and justice. ■

Palace issues new protocol plates

by MARVIN SY
Philstar.com



Photo courtesy of Philstar.com

AS if there weren't enough special "protocol" plates, Malacañang has decided to issue another one—number 17—for judges of the metropolitan and municipal trial courts and sharia courts.

Complaints from motorists about the proliferation of vehicles with protocol plates and the abuses committed by the owners of these plates were apparently not enough to warrant an end to the issuance of this type of license plates.

In memorandum order 297 issued by Malacañang last March 2, No. 17 was added to the existing protocol plate numbers for the judges.

Abuses committed by the owners of these license plates have been reported countless times and even caused a word war between the Land Transportation Office and the Speaker of the House of Representatives.

Allegations of the number

reported about vehicles with protocol plates being driven by people other than the authorized owner.

While most of the protocol plate owners are easily identifiable, the ones used by the members of Congress, justices, associate justices, judges and undersecretaries are more difficult to identify because these are issued to multiple individuals.

Protocol plate 1 is issued to the President, 2 to the Vice President, 3 to the Senate president, 4 to the House speaker, 5 to the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court (SC), 6 to Cabinet Secretaries, 7 to senators, 8 to congressmen, 9 to associate justices of the SC, 10 to the presiding justice and other justices of the Court of Appeals, 11 to the Commission on Elections chairman, 12 to Cabinet undersecretaries, 13 to the Solicitor General, 14 to the chiefs of the Armed Forces of the Philippines and the Philippine National Police, and 16 to the Regional Trial Court judges. ■

"8" protocol plates assigned to members of the House of Representatives being sold and used by unauthorized motorists caused a minor conflict between Speaker Prospero Nograles and then LTO chief Alberto Suansing. At the time, the LTO even considered bringing back the practice of printing the province and district of the congressmen on the protocol plates for easy identification.

Almost all motorists in the country have encountered the abusive behavior of the drivers of vehicles with protocol plates. Even more cases were

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